

WASHINGTON, D.C.--Several Central Coast officials visited Washington this week to help coordinate federal, state and local efforts to combat gang violence in the region. Officials attended a series of meetings organized by Congressman Sam Farr (D-Calif.).

The group joined Rep. Farr on Tuesday afternoon in separate meetings with California Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer. Members of the group are also meeting with officials from the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Justice, and Health and Human Services.

"The only way we're going to begin to solve the gang problem in our communities is to bring together federal, state and local officials and join forces," said Rep. Farr. "When we combine state and federal resources with local knowledge of the problem, we can start to find ways to address the situation."

A meeting is also scheduled for Wednesday morning with Rep. Alan Mollohan (D-W.Va.), chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science. Rep. Mollohan's subcommittee is responsible for \$1 million in this year's funding bill for the countywide Street Violence and Anti-Gang Project.

This week's meetings with federal officials followed a session in San Francisco earlier this month when gang task force representatives met with state officials.

Officials in Washington include Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue and Salinas Police Chief Daniel Ortega; Salinas Councilmembers Janet Barnes, Jyl Lutes and Steve Villegas; Monterey District 5 Supervisor Dave Potter and Monterey District 1 Supervisor Fernando Armenta; and Soledad Mayor Pro Tem Christopher Bourke.

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